



Meteorites and other Offaly oddities

Rosita Boland

From pyramids to partridges, a new book shows off the county's quirky side

Did you know that at least three meteorites have hit Co Offaly? Me neither. But they have, and the most recent was in mid-1980s, on the bog road near Clonbulloge. This is one of the nuggets featured in *100 Quirky Facts about County Offaly*, a charming book that has just been published by the **Heritage Council**.

A similar project was carried out in 2009 for the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area, on which this is based. Although only published recently, the book has already sold more than 2,000 copies, according to its author, the county's heritage officer, Amanda Pedlow.

"The lovely thing is that we're hearing from the bookshops in the county is that all ages of people are buying it," she says. "The children seem to like the snappy pieces of information about their area, and people who would never sit down and read a big novel are curious to find out more about where they live."

As Pedlow explains, the book "covers the whole remit of heritage". Her own favourite is the Coneyburrow entry, which shows how a place name has been retained for hundreds of years. It was first recorded in 1550 in the Offaly Survey. The Anglo-Normans farmed rabbits for food in a specially made rabbit warren, called a "conynger" in Middle English, and "conicear" in Irish, later angli-

cised into "coneyburrow." Today, the place name that tells of its past still exists; Coneyburrow is the name of a housing estate outside Edenderry.

Among the many other fascinating revelations in this book is that Offaly has two pyramids; the last remaining population of grey partridges in Ireland; the grave of the last "Tithe Martyr" in Ireland; 102 gate lodges; and the first column built in an Irish town.

The book also gives the GPS co-ordinates for each place, so you can go looking for them yourself. Every county should have such an inspired resource.

Are there any little-known, quirky facts about your county? Let us know at features@irishtimes.com. *Did You Know...? 100 Quirky Facts about County Offaly* is published by The **Heritage Council**, €10

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